

# Tales From Erstol

**By Martin Brady**

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Hey there, this is a collection of Short Stories which are loosely related to Erstol. Some are about existing characters and others are new. They may or may not directly relate to Engines Under Ursus but are in that imagined Universe.

## Table of Contents

Tales From Erstol.....	1
By Martin Brady.....	1
Drexler - Human Alliance.....	1
The Curious Case of the Exploding Cat.....	3
The Others.....	5
Exploop.....	7
On The Edge.....	9
A Piece of Nine.....	9
Cyber.....	9
Hire Don't Fire.....	10
Neanderthals Vs The Others.....	10

## ***Drexler - Human Alliance***

There was a new Station Manager in town. Paxton Drexler took the Human Alliance shuttle in through the dome gate and entered Erstol, taking in its view for the first time. The shuttle glided past the impressive Citynet building and went downtown to the largest off world Embassy that Earth possessed and it was arguably its most important because of Citynet's growing importance in the sector. Drexler was the youngest HA Station chief in history. He wiped back his dark hair checking his Latino features and gave his trademark look which had cut down men twice his age during critical briefings. There was a new HA Sheriff in town.

He straightened his sharp suit and checked the positioning of his small Earth pin with the letters HA embossed on it in gold against the blue. Beneath the shuttle, rows of humans and aliens queued to go into the HA Embassy passing through the exhaustive security checks. The protective force field dome around the Complex opened and his shuttle entered the inner sanctum of the HA Base which was a world within a world.

To work for HA you had to not just be the best; you had to be the very best. There were banks of tests and rows of interviews. There were personality tests and puzzles and team sport contests. From one thousand applicants maybe a couple would be permitted to enter the hallowed ranks of HA. This was

the most elite group of people from Earth and they came from every corner of the planet and their job was simple; To Protect Earth's interests and Keep It Safe. Countries could have their differences but HA watched over the planet like a Mythic Owl. Most had some kind of exceptional academic ability and Drexler was no different. He had a photographic memory and had aced all his math exams coming in the top one percent on the planetary exams. That helped him get past the first set of exams but he had aced the other tests too and had climbed within the HA ranks steadily.

The HA shuttle landed in the middle of what looked like an Olympic stadium, surrounded by a complex of fantastically architected buildings. All around him, HA students were exercising or playing sports of some kind. Two HA Marines in silver suits walked over to him and saluted him. He just nodded and looked forward and stepped into the automated buggy they had brought him.

“At ease,” he said to them and got into the buggy by himself.

“Location?” asked the buggy.

“Main building, I'm hungry,” replied Drexler and sat back as it rolled along the ground giving him a small tour of the live fire areas, the swimming pools, the gymnasium, the sports arenas, the living quarters, the bars and clubs and the simulation rooms. The HA head quarters were a world within another world.

He entered the main building and walked to the nearest twenty-four-seven restaurant and sat down.

On the screens all around him there were courses to be taken on the Ixian language, conspiracy theory rooms, massage rooms, Tai Chi, martial arts, sensory rooms and more. The creative programs spun by on the over head screens and Drexler looked down at the menu.

The Sous Chef walked over.

“On the menu today we have Truffles and Foie gras. We also have freshly squeezed orange juice from Valencia and our corn fed eggs are sourced from Alsace L'Orraine.”

Drexler nodded. “An Omelet please as well,” he said and took a holo-card which he tossed toward the Sous chef who received his preference on his sensory suit.

“To drink?” inquired the Sous Chef.

“Double espresso,” he said absent-minded. “And some plain mineral water.”

The Sous chef nodded and left.

He glanced at the nearby screen showing the story behind the formation of HA. Small children walked in a line with a tutor on their way to see the HA Approved Documentary called Day of the Apkani. He smiled a little, remembering his young formative years on Earth when he had first seen the documentary and how it had changed his life and how even at such a young age, he knew he wanted to join HA – if they would have him.

The food was good and he finished it then headed up to his new office.

He took a scooter.

“Floor one, block one” he instructed as he stood on it, bringing him through the vast complex past the genetic laboratories called “Block 23”. Beside it were the Med Labs and the Hardware rooms where new weapons systems were tested out. The specialized blocks passed by and Drexler checked them against his photographic memory already knowing everything about each section including the personnel.

The scooter climbed a slope and ended up on floor one which took him past the schools and universities. Beyond lay Block one proper and his office Room One from which he could oversee everything.

He hopped off and walked up the busy corridor to be met by handfuls of salutes. Everyone stood up immediately.

“My office,” pointed Drexler to a man waiting outside his office.

HA Agent Petersen immediately saluted.

Drexler just gave him his trademark look which turned Petersen's spine to jelly.

“This is everything,” said Petersen. “Every piece of information we have on everyone on Erstol, human and non-human like you asked. Nothing overlooked.”

Petersen looked exhausted.

However Drexler just took the data cubes and threw them onto the floor.

“First lesson! Noise, that's all this is!!” shouted Drexler. “I need you to get me everything you have on this person,” snarled Drexler. “I want to know everything about him, even the stuff he doesn't even know about himself.”

Drexler threw a hologram in front of Petersen and pointed his finger at it.

“He is number one on our shit list. You got it? Leave no stone unturned. I want to know EVERYTHING!!” he shouted.

Petersen nodded, looking at the image of Tom Fowler.

“Got it,” said the HA Agent.

“Now GET OUT!” shouted Drexler.

## ***The Curious Case of the Exploding Cat***

Chutt-Ho sat in his office, sipping gently from his straw when Booje Crinny walked in.

Outside the office, the human female Maya Balawanny sat in the waiting area. The smell of her perfume wafted through the air, clinging to Chutt-Ho's scent sacs.

"She refuses to leave," insisted Booje who looked like a cross between a small hairless bear and an Ant.

"I don't want to see her," insisted Chutt-Ho. "I am busy," he said, feeling a little tipsy.

"Her husband is Benny Four-Arms," said Booje. "If we don't take the case, one of his associates told me we would both be recycled!!"

Chutt-Ho's tentacles bristled and he straightened himself up. "All right, show her in," said Chutt-Ho and he slid the sponges under his desk.

The human woman Maya sat down and looked distraught.

"How may I help you Maya?" asked Chutt-Ho.

"It all began when my cat mysteriously exploded!" began Maya. She struggled to stay inside her thin dress which barely held in her curves. She wiped her tongue off her glossy lipstick and then took out a handkerchief. She dabbed the tears away from her long, fake eye lashes.

"So you would like my agency to investigate how your cat exploded?" inquired Chutt-Ho.

"NO!!!" she screamed. "I HATED THAT CAT!!! Aren't you listening to me???"

Chutt-Ho raised his tentacles in the air in a perplexed manner. "Please proceed."

"I want you to find Barnabus! He's gone and I can't find him. After my cat exploded, he just disappeared!"

"What is your relation to Barnabus?"

She raised her arms wide. "He's my dog. He's been gone for a couple of days now and I can't find him." She showed him a picture of a Tiny Maltese Dog which was very cute.

Chutt-Ho focused his eyes on the pretty puppy.

"Maya," said Chutt-Ho slowly. "As you may be aware, we are a detective agency of the highest repute. Unfortunately we do not find dogs. However, I do have some associates who would be glad to help you find your dog."

However, Maya's face went bright red with anger. "DO YOU KNOW WHO MY HUSBAND IS?" she screamed.

"Yes," replied Chutt-Ho.

She narrowed her eyes. “If you don't take this case, I will make sure that Benny Four Arms chops you and your friends up into little pieces and your bodies will never be found.” Maya was seething with anger.

Chutt-Ho paused and slid his relaxation sponges into plain view and drank some of the alcoholic juice.

He steadied his tentacles and composed himself.

“Upon further consideration, reviewing the pertinent facts, I will take the case,” replied Chutt-Ho.

“You got five days,” hissed Maya.

Chutt-Ho's tentacles tied themselves up for a moment and then released.

She got up. “I'll let myself out.”

“A pleasure dealing with you Maya. Booje will give you daily updates. And please give my finest regards to Benny Four Arms.”

Hearing his name, Booje leaned into Chutt-Ho's office and his ant whiskers twitched on his bear like face.

“Daily what dates?” inquired Booje.

## ***The Others***

Wall Street, New York October 28 1929

Doug McKenzie watched as the historic New York Stock Exchange bell had been rung to get things moving once more. Morning trading on the floor of the world's most famous stock exchange began and it seemed that the sky had no limit. Almost everyone he knew had invested in the stock market and had found some kind of personal fortune in it. And almost everyone had some kind of tip on the next big stock from the guy selling the news papers at the local stand to the local shop keeper. For the most part everyone was right because the market just kept going up and up. The Stock Market had been on a Bull run for almost a decade and everyone was partying in their own way.

However on this morning, Doug McKenzie walked over to his contact on the floor.

“Did you sell all my stock?” asked Doug.

“Went through first thing this morning Mr McKenzie,” said the trader to the millionaire.

“Now process this one,” said Doug.

“Are you crazy?” smiled the trader, looking at the order.

“Just do it,” smiled Doug who had bet that all the major stocks would fall.

The broker just shrugged and placed the order and he waited for it to go through.

The broker nodded once it was complete and then Doug left the busy floor.

He looked at his watch and waited for the right moment to arrive.

The minute hand ticked into place.

Now, thought Doug.

He reached into his pocket where there were some sealed glass vials containing a colorless, odorless scent.

He popped the vials open with his thumb so no-one could see.

The invisible particles inside it flew out of the pressurized container and spread out across the floor of the stock exchange.

The first stock broker who inhaled the particles felt nothing at first but then blinked a little. Slowly he felt his emotional well being fade and then he began to feel anxious.

Images of the stocks he bought and sold, crashing out of all existence flashed through his mind.

He wiped his brow and he began to feel sweaty.

A sense of panic spread over him.

He looked around him at the other traders and in his mind they all seemed to know it too.

He perspired.

The sweat that formed on his skin made more of the scent particle he had inhaled and the feeling of dread began to intensify and spread out more filling the air of the stock exchange.

The sense of unease began to jump from one trader to another, gripping them.

Selling began and then the phone calls came in.

Panicked traders talked on the phone that there was something going down. They could feel it in their gut and it was bad.

People started running and screaming, sweating and panicking.

“SELL! SELL!! SELL!!!”

The invisible scent continued to fill the air.

The traders crushed around their stands looking for buyers but they had disappeared.

It intensified.

All around the city, others like Doug had opened their vials of colorless, odorless containers and it had begun.

The entire city was beginning to panic even people on the streets as word spread.

Doug reached his office and sat down calmly.

The stock ticker tape was going crazy as prices dropped.

People were standing around it, watching the falling stock quotes, unable to believe what they were seeing.

They ran to their phones and demanded that their stock be sold.

In his office, Doug picked up his phone calmly and smiled.

“Markets are dropping fast,” he commented.

A woman's voice spoke up. “It's time to move into real estate now,” she said.

Doug sat back and smiled and lit up a cigarette.

“Fancy a bit of sailing first?” she asked.

“Sounds perfect,” smiled Doug looking at the Manhattan skyline.

## ***Exploop***

Lake Baikal, June 30 1908, Near Tunguska

Under the deepest lake in the world in Russia, an alien and a human prepared their secret time travel mission unknown to the dwellers on the surface.

Drlop, the Alien in charge of the underground time travel device who looked eerily human but clearly was not prepared the antimatter containment field around the sphere which would be transported into the past.

The Other, a Russian born man, named Vasily reviewed his time travel mission and scratched his stubbly chin. He looked at the map co-ordinates in St. Petersburg and his target.

He looked at his watch. “When do we go?”

“I am almost ready,” said Drlop, operating the time travel device which had arched supports that created the time confinement field around the sphere.

“Good,” replied Vasily who was becoming impatient.

It was at this moment that all hell seemed to break loose.

A massive Earth quake hit the underground base and everything shook including the time travel device.

Vasily fell to his knees and then got back up shakily.

Alarms sounded and vents of steam shot across the room.

“What the hell was that?” asked Vasily.

“A surface explosion. Zero radiation but with megaton explosive quantity. Extensive destruction.” He showed an image of a flattened forest in Tunguska as the central shock wave spread out across the planet.

“Are we under attack?” asked Vasily.

“No,” replied Drlop. “But we have a problem. The anti-matter containment field has been breached and will fail in eight seconds.”

Vasily's eyes opened wide and he let out a loud Russian swear.

Drlop acted instantly and ejected the core into the time machine where it flashed and then disappeared.

“What did you do?”

“I sent it into the past,” replied Drlop. “Your mission has been postponed.”

“Where did you send it to??” demanded Vasily. “That was anti-matter!!”



“I sent it to Tunguska.”

Vasily scratched his head. “But that is what caused the accident!”

“Yes,” replied Drlop, his fingers continuing to dance over the console of the time machine.

“I am confused,” said Vasily. “Which came first, the explosion or the accident?”

“Neither,” replied Drlop. “It is an Exploop.”

“A what?” asked Vasily.

“It is a loop in the fabric of Space and Time. Would you ask where a circle begins and ends?”

Vasily shook his head and then took out some Vodka and drank it. “I HATE TIME TRAVEL!” he declared.

## ***On The Edge***

//TODO - Rayna goes on board a destroyed TOL vessel at the edge of the Universe

## ***A Piece of Nine***

//TODO – Suth goes onto a dead world in search of a piece of nine. He joins a team who fight for survival on the surface in the games while above them gamblers bet on whether they will live or die.

## ***Cyber***

//TODO Sol and Fowler investigate a Citynet case in the early days of the service.

## ***Hire Don't Fire***

//Chutt-Ho interviews a new candidate

## ***Neanderthals Vs The Others***

//A group of Neanderthals 40000 years ago hunt wild boar near a European lake with a giant waterfall and come in contact with another group like them with smaller faces and in their midst is an Alien with large eyes and gray skin who is directing the new new group. The two groups fight to the death while the alien looks on and takes notes.